We are all liches now

U

T.kristi

F.kristi

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Fkristi

For further information
address the author

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Seven hundred archers,
running down a hill

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Chapter 5

A thank you to 171

What I offer is a web of half-choked ravings that vaunts its incompetence, exploiting the meticulous conceptual fabrications of positive knowledge as a resource for delirium, appealing only to the indolent, the maladapted, and the psychologically diseased.

I would like to think that if due to some collective spiritual seism the natural sciences were to become strictly unintelligible to us, and were read instead as a poetics of the sacred, the consequence would resonate with the text that follows. At least disorder grow**s**.

from letter **W** *to* **s** *Nick Land's* The Thirst for Annihilation, *p. 26, is quoted.*

Chapter 1

Fossil flesh

dug up and
dragged

projected into

serpentine pattern

Spring flares out like smallpox

Che climate changed. We couldn't breathe. It grew terribly cold. Far too cold for us. Everything we touched was poisonou**s**. **S**ickened and chilled as we are only when the blood actually refuses, and no longer works. Our veins were not made for this ag**e**. **S**ome said we had brought it on ourselves, that all our activity had backfired, that we had destroyed our environment b**y** an unfortunate display of instincts. **T**here were rumours of betrayal and sabotage, whisperings of alien invasion and mutant beings from another ship. Only a few of us survived the brea**k**. **S**pring flared out like smallpo**x**. Flowers bloomed from our skin.

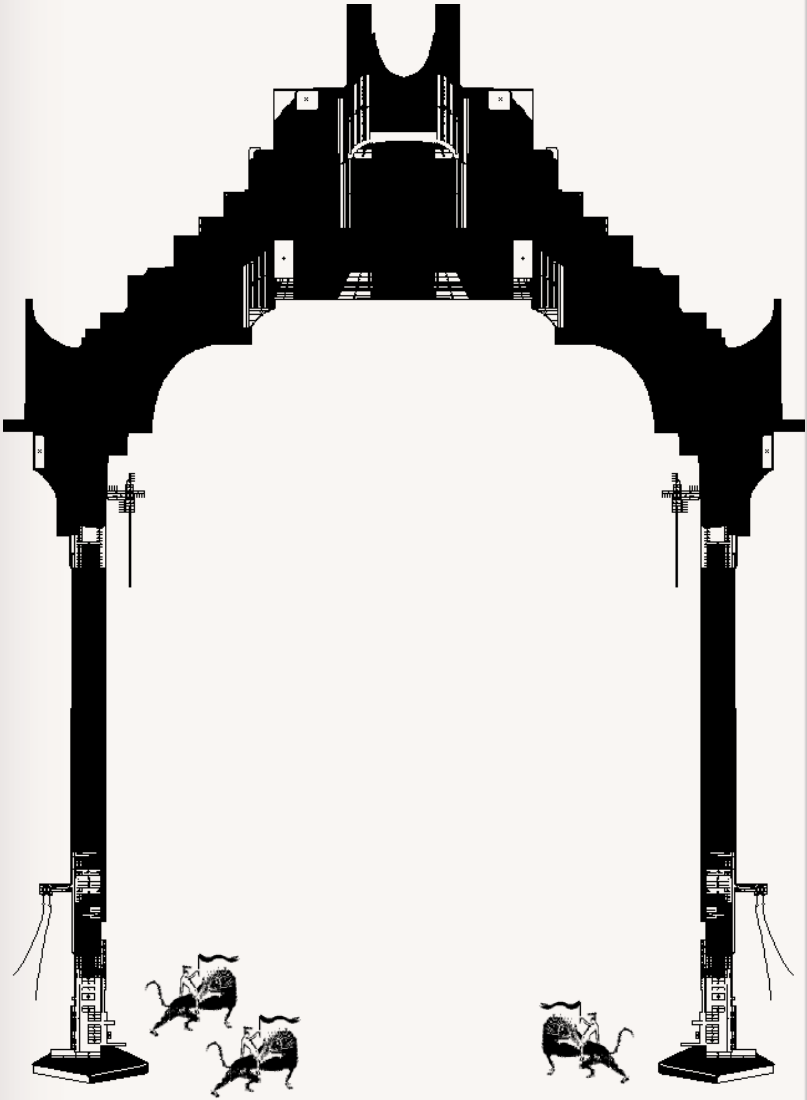
C *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 4*
S *Marguerite Yourcenar*, Memoirs of Hadrian, *p. 27*
T *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 4*
S *Hagiwara Sakutaro*, Howling at the moon
S *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 4*

We mutated to such an extent that we were unrecognisable to ourselves, banding together in units of a kind which, like everything, had been unthinkable before. The world became a system, lawful yet unpredictable. A complex of bridges and conduits, branching passageways and hidden trapdoors. Guarded by the mightiest demons, portals through which only a time-seasoned thinking may pass. Gazing into the darkness, full of light rays receding faster than they can be observed. Endlessly straying into the beyond, we thought we saw proof of the openness of the universe, its wordlines diverging infinitely. For in a closed world, would the sky not brim with convergent rays?

Such false creeds made of us chimerical children. Born at once of darkness, of becoming of the flow of time, and of openness. When we set sail on the rivers of our nature, passing through the ravines at the edge of the universe—all in hope of meeting like-minded intelligences—we never encountered anything but ourselves. We found ourselves working as slave components of systems whose scales and complexities we could not comprehend. Are we their parasites? Are they ours? Either way we became components of our own imprisonment. To all intents and purposes, we disappeared.

Only our infinite extensions projected into the void were left.

W *Reza Negarestani et al*, Chronosis, *p. 21-23*
W *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 4*
O *Reza Negarestani et al*, Chronosis, *p. 23*

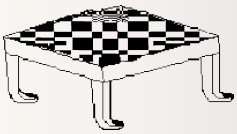


Maxwell's demon

I was looking down from my window. I live in an apartment complex inside a gated community. The apartments have been built on old land, but the only leftover of it is the entrance gate and some of the original fence. The fence is Cyclopean masonry, a wall of roughly fitted, unworked limestone boulders. It's too tall see beyond but should be easy to climb over. The only accessible entry point is the main gate, a 15th century gateway covered with a roof. On each side of it a small effigy stands, one demon and the other angel shaped, each holding an orb. The rest of the building is contemporary, not much personality to it. It's mostly dry efficiency.

The wind was particularly warm for an early spring evening. I noticed Ganymede walking in through the main gate. I went to stand in the corridor to wait thereConversations with Ganymede usually have no real beginning. There's no opening to them, I just get dropped in the middle of a dialogue. This might be because of the not so subtle time shift that occurs every time Ganymede appears. Any part of the day we meet is late night.

I politely waited by the door. The evening turned dark by the time Ganymede showed up on the staircase. I waved and Ganymede nodded, inviting me in. When I agreed, Ganymede softly pushed me away and opened the door to my apartment. I took Ganymede's coat and hanged it on the coat rack while Ganymede prepared tea. Since it was already dark outside I closed the curtains. By now the warm wind died down and the city was cooling down.



Ganymede only drinks from the finest porcelain

"Maxwell's Demon is a mythical being in a thought experiment proposed by James Clerk Maxwell in 1871," Ganymede explained while putting some leftover camomile cake on a plate. We were sitting behind my chequer squared table. Tea was boiling. "The Demon gained energy by sorting molecules. Szilard and Leon Brillouin, among others, pointed out that to sort molecules, the Demon has to have information about them. The container in which the Demon sits is imagined as a »black body« (a technical term meaning that the radiation is uniformly dispersed) so that there is no way for the Demon to »see« the molecules. Brillouin calculated that the energy the Demon would have to expend to get information about the molecules is greater than what the Demon could gain by the sorting process." I nodded while pouring us both some tea. " This connected entropy with information.
As early as 1929, the connection was made through Leo Szilard's interpretation of Maxwell's Demon," Entropy is the disorder present in a system. The tea was still too hot to drink. Ganymede specified: "Ludwig Boltzmann gave entropy a much more general formulation by defining it as a probability function. In this »dematerialised« construction, entropy was interpreted as a measure of randomness. The second law was then reformulated to state that closed systems tend to move from order to

M *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 101*

T, T, L *ibid*, *p. 101*

randomness." Second law of what, I wondered. "The first law of thermodynamics, stating that energy is neither created nor destroyed, points to a world in which no energy is lost. The second law, stating that entropy always tends to increase in a closed system, forecasts a universe that is constantly winding down. This tension between the first and second laws, between stability and degradation, runs like a leitmotiv through turn-of-the-century cultural formations." I vaguely understood. Ganymede did not seem to care or find it important enough to explain further and instead continued talking about Szilard and Leon Brillouin's interpretation of Maxwell's Demon

"An immediate result was to rescue the second law, which in any case was too well-established to be seriously in doubt." The second law was that closed systems tend to move from order to randomness, I repeated to myself.

"The more important implication was to suggest that entropy and information are inversely related to each other. The more information there is, the less entropy; the more entropy is present, the less information. Brillouin therefore proposed that information be considered as negative entropy, or negentropy. Maxwell's Demon was one of the relay points through which a relationship was established between entropy and information."
I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. I burned my tongue with

T *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 102*
H, T ibid, *p. 102*

the hot spoon. "Like Brillouin and many others of his generation, Wiener accepted the idea that entropy was the opposite of information. The inverse relation made sense to him because he thought of information as allied with structure and viewed entropy as associated with randomness, dissipation, and death." Ganymede was able to drink the still steaming tea without flinching.

"»Creases,« he wrote »the universe, and all closed systems in the universe, tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organisation and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness. In Gibbs' universe order is least probable, chaos most probable.« In this view, life is an island of negentropy amid a sea of disorder. In a related metaphor, he envisioned a living organism as an informational system swimming upstream against the entropic tide." I shifted a bit in my seat.

Did not really feel like I could add anything to this, so Ganymede spoke again. "Claude Shannon took the opposite view and identified information and entropy rather than opposed them. Since the choice of sign was conventional, this formulation was also a possibility. Heuristically, Shannon's choice was explained by saying that the more unexpected (or random) a message is, the more information it conveys. This change in sign did

L, O, C ibid, *p. 102*

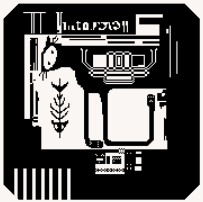
not affect the dematerialisation that entropy had undergone, but it did reverse entropy's value in more than a mathematical sense. In retrospect, identifying entropy with information can be seen as a crucial crossing point, for this allowed entropy to be reconceptualised as the thermodynamic motor driving systems to self-organisation rather than as the heat engine driving the world to universal heat death. Suffice it to say that as a result, chaos went from being associated with dissipation in the Victorian sense of dissolute living and reckless waste to being associated with dissipation in a newly positive sense of increasing complexity and new lif**e**." The camomile cake had a thin layer of sugary glaze.

Molecule pond

I wanted to ask Ganymede something but completely forgot about it. I only remembered it when cleaning up the table. It was too late though, Ganymede left pretty quickly after finishing the tea. That night, I went to sleep still annoyed. In my dream, I was sitting next to Maxwell's Demon, shifting through molecules to sort them out. Shaped like marble balls, the molecules were bobbing up and down in a perfect circle pond. The demon was wiggling its tail in a rhythmic manner, grimacing. We did not speak to each other.

I figured out the system of sorting by observing the Demon for a bit. The general rule was to put the quicker molecules to the right, the slower ones to the left. Easy to follow, but I still erred. Every time I made a mistake the Demon put its red, scaly hand on mine and moved it towards the correct direction. The touch was surprisingly gentle and only a bit warmer than a human's would feel like. We continued on working until late in the morning.

Fuzzy fur



A few days later on a lazy Sunday morning I woke up to Ganymede's kitten meowing and scratching at my window. Still half asleep I reached out to open the window (it's right above my bed) and let it in. The kitten jumped on my blanket and carefully walked closer to my head.The kitten is usually stored in a small microchip, Ganymede takes it out from behind the left ear every morning to feed it almond milk with bread crumbles soaked in it. The kitten rarely meows but buzzes a lot. It also smells a bit musky and a lot like plastic, especially when it's hot and it gets too warm in the fuzzy fur. The kitten is not too cuddly but likes to bump its head against Ganymede's forehead. It bumped foreheads with me too. The whiskers were tingly. They brushed against my cheek. I was not surprised by the kitten's presence since it often freely roams the apartment complex. It probably meant that Ganymede was already off somewhere in the city and the kitten was looking for someone else's attention.

I spent the morning and early afternoon in my apartment and the kitten kept close. Its constant buzzing was a calming white noise. It asked to be let out around three in the afternoon. Ganymede was back home.

Serpent's tongue i.

It's quite hard to initiate conversations with Ganymede. Talking to Ganymede is a lot like opening a half read book and continuing someone else's reading. The lines are already pre-written. It's as if Ganymede already picked out the text that is going to be said out loudly beforehand. Once there is no more text to be performed Ganymede leaves.

There's a calming sense in the way Ganymede reads out loud thoughts. In a bit of a monotonous, soft spoken voice the text leaves Ganymede's mouth. Each word is formed politely. From the tongue tip to first the upper then lower lip and through the front teeth back to the tongue blade touching the palate, the air moves softly from and to the lungs.

Serpent's tongue ii.

As a kid, Ganymede started to talk quite late. Around the same time, Ganymede got chicken pox. Ganymede **F**ell ill and slipped into delirium. It was impossible fo**r** Ganymede **C**o distinguish among pain and difficulty in breathing, the flapping, of the window curtain, and certain as yet unresolved parts of a mathematical proble**m**. Only when the skin flared up with rashes did words flare up in Ganymede's mind.

There is still a small scar on Ganymede's forehead where a particularly annoying rash was scratched off.

F, C *Katherine Hayles,*
How to Become Posthuman, *p. 92*

Late for train

Yesterday Ganymede stopped me when I was running down the staircase to catch my train. Ganymede insisted to talk to me about the conversation we had over tea few days back. I asked what were the consequences of this thought experiment.

"**T**he emphasis on pattern constructed bodies as immaterial flows of information," Ganymede was holding a bouquet of freshly cut tulips. True, the tulip season has started. It's already end of March. The yellow of the tulips contrasted with the red of Ganymede's sweater.

"**O**ur tissues change as we live: the food we eat and the air we breathe become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and the momentary elements of our flesh and bone pass out of our body every day with our excreta. We are but whirlpools in a river of ever-flowing water. We are not stuff that abides, but patterns that perpetuate themselves. Consequently, to understand humans, one needs to understand how the patterns of information they embody are created, organised, stored, and retrieved." I did not have time to react as I heard the train arriving at the platform and had to rush to catch it.

T *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 100*

O *Norbert Wiener*, The Human Use of Human Beings, *p. 96*

Serpent's tongue iii.

Talking to Ganymede is like
eating mussels and biting into a pearl.

Chapter 2

Information

divorced from meaning

bunched up into
dead matter

Liches i.

A baby born with one or two teeth
has great potential to wield divination.

A lich rattles your teeth

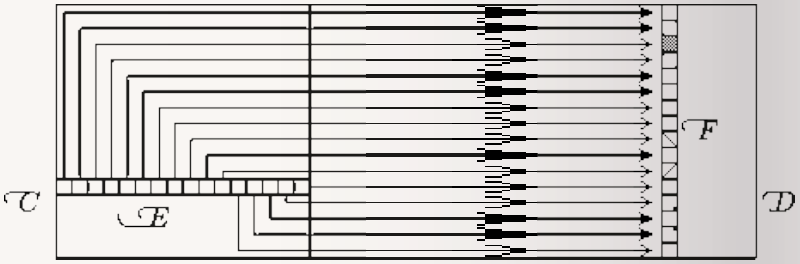
Liches are ones that, in a pursue of power, channel their potency to divine towards death. To become one, a wizard must first engage with necromancy, the practice of communication with the dead. This can mean summoning passed spirits or raising them bodily. Rattle a bag of rabbit bones or spill a handful of teeth on the ground. The dead gets animated by the spunky living. A wizard then can use these techniques on their own bodily material.

Liches iii.

Liches are ones that, to achieve eternal life, turn their body into blackening or decay, just to reanimate it again in order to remain in being. They abstract their body into dead matter. This matter then gets shaped into a tool. Once it's moulded, the newly sculpted dead matter tool gets reattached to the living body—the lich wields it as an extension of themselves. Core strengthened with necrosis, corrupt flesh as a guarantor of power. A lich is a living being transformed undead, intellect charging the process.

Liches iv.

Liches are ones that gradually putrefy themselves into dead matter to then reanimate it in the shape of an undead tool. The living and undead matter expand over each other, interlocking in a ghastly landscape. It is decay that provides the bridge between the two; a slow, dripping abstraction of one into the other. The intellect of a lich is what vitalises the undead matter to serve as a tool. Through the liches' persistence undead becomes a generative medium.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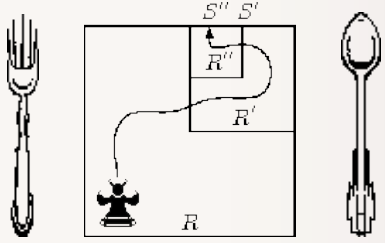
S'' S'
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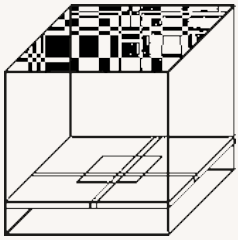
$$\mu(B') \le \frac{11}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1}.$$

$$334 \cdot \frac{11}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1} > 7 \cdot 165^{j},$$

6



Infinite chess i.

Coming home from a long day, I stopped by to buy food at a street vendor. Some unforeseen circumstances complicated my plans and I spend the whole afternoon trying to get things back in order. Finally, by late evening, I was shuffling home tiredly. Sitting by the entrance gate, Ganymede was braiding a strand of hair. When noticing me, Ganymede's gaze lifted. "**ω**hy divorce information from meanin**g**?" I shrugged. It was late and I was hungry.

ω *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 53*

"**S**hannon and Wiener wanted information to have a stable value as it moved from one context to another. If it was tied to meaning, it would potentially have to change values every time it was embedded in a new context, because context affects meanin**g**." Ganymede relentlessly continued. "**T**o cut through this Gordian knot, Shannon and Wiener defined information so that it would be calculated as the same value regardless of the contexts in which it was embedded, which is to say, they divorced it from meanin**g**." Ganymede put a knot on the braid. "**T**aken out of context, the definition allowed information to be conceptualised as if it were an entity that can flow unchanged between different material substrates, as when Moravec envisions the information contained in a brain being downloaded into a computer. Ironically, this reification of information is enacted through the same kind of decontextualising moves that the theory uses to define information as such. The theory decontextualises information; Moravec decontextualises the theory. Thus, a simplification necessitated by engineering considerations becomes an ideology in which a reified concept of information is treated as if it were fully commensurate with the complexities of human thought."

This all seemed too vague and unreachable. I told this to Ganymede. Instead of directly answering,

S Katherine Hayles, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 54*

T, T ibid, *p. 53-54*

Ganymede blinked for a bit too long, considering. Ganymede's kitten jumped down from the window of the ground floor apartment and joined us. Ganymede's eyes, startled by this, opened. "**S**hannon cautioned that he did not see »too close a connection between the notion of information as we use it in communication engineering and what you are doing here… the problem here is not so much finding the best encoding of symbols… but, rather, the determination of the semantic question of what to send and to whom to send i**t**.« " The kitten furrowed its little face and head-bumped Ganymede's side.

"**F**or Shannon, defining information as a probability function was a strategic choice that enabled him to bracket semantics. He did not want to get involved in having to consider the receiver's mindset as part of the communication system. He felt so strongly on this point that he suggested to distinguish between information in a channel and information in a human mind by characterising the latter through »subjective probabilities,« although how these were to be defined and calculated was by no means clea**r**." Ganymede scratched the kitten's head. I repeated that this all seems too vague and unreachable. The kitten buzzed happily and flipped over on its back, dangling all four feet in the air. Ganymede would have liked to abstract living matter,

S, **F** ibid, *p. 54*

and then mould it into freely floating pattern sequences. Ganymede seemed excited by the idea. Ganymede too wanted to free heavy flesh from embodiment. Ganymede also thought sequences were light and limber and good to braid with. Silky lithe, they would not snap when bent. Ganymede suggested to continue the conversation inside, as it was already getting cold outside. I agreed. Ganymede picked up the kitten and I opened the entrance gate.

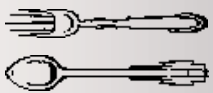
$$\mu(U_\tau) \leq \frac{11}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1} + 2 \cdot 165^{j-1} = \frac{17}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1}.$$

Ganymede's apartment has a specific structure to it. All the edges are aligned to each other, creating a chequer-field pattern of furniture and walls. Stepping in feels like walking into a three dimensional chess table. Ganymede, walking from one field to the other, lead the way to the kitchenette. The architecture of the apartment itself is identical to mine, but somehow the shapes do not feel familiar. Out of curtesy I followed Ganymede's pattern of moving across the room. Ganymede reached out a hand to take the food I bought earlier to warm it up for me.

$$165 \cdot 2 \cdot 165^{j-2} = 2 \cdot 165^{j-1}$$

$$\mu(U_\tau) \leq \frac{17}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1} + 95 \cdot 2 \cdot 165^{j-2} < 7 \cdot 165^{j-1}.$$

$$\mu(B') \leq \frac{11}{3} \cdot 165^{j-1}.$$



I put down my fork once I finished eating. A bitter aftertaste of the unfinished conversation lingered. I wondered how would one reshape living matter into information. Ganymede, searching for a lighter, replied. "**T**he reformation of language—a key element in 16th and 17th century-philosophy, from Bacon to Locke—was a major concern of Joseph Glanvil. He advocates a language fit to describe such a world will bear broad similarities to mathematics, will have words of great generality and clarity; will present a picture of the universe according to its subjective and objective, and »will avoid metaphor as way of knowing and describing, for metaphor depends on the assumption that the universe does not consist of wholly distinct entities and cannot therefore be fully described in positive distinct terms**...**« " I took a lighter from my back pocket and handed it to Ganymede. Ganymede lit with it a half melted candle. After a bit of thinking, Ganymede was not really satisfied with the answer. Ganymede mostly struggled with the lack of metaphor. Glanvil's system felt too rigid.

"**I**n »The Nature of Analogy,« a manuscript fragment dated 1950, Wiener offers a strong defence for analogy, moving the argument onto new and more compelling groun**d**." Peach, plum and vanilla aroma slowly filled up the room. "**W**iener begins by pointing out that language is always analogical, in the sense that it puts forth

T *Silvia Federici*, Caliban and the Witch, *p. 155*

I *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, p. 97

W *ibid*, *p. 97*

propositions that listeners must interpret from their own experiences, which are never identical to the speaker's."

Ganymede compared Wiener's definition of information and Ferdinand de Saussure's view of la langue, or language as a system. "In both cases, communication proceeds through selection from a field of possible alternatives rather than through the direct articulation of inherent reference. Just as Saussurian linguistics is associated with deconstructive theories that reveal the indeterminacy of reference and that expose the inability of language to ground itself, so Wiener's cybernetics sees communication as a probabilistic act in a probabilistic universe, where initial conditions are never known exactly and where messages signify only through their relation to other messages that might have been sent. For Wiener no less than Saussure, signification is about relation, not about the world as a thing-in-itself." There was also the end note of patchouli. What was the link between perception and relation?

"Perception does not reflect reality directly but rather relies on transformations that preserve a pattern across multiple sensory modalities and neural interfaces. Representation emerges through the analogical relation of these transformations to the original stimulus. In this respect, sense perception is like mathematics and logic,

I *Katherine Hayles*, How to Become Posthuman, *p. 98*

P *ibid*, *p. 98*

for they too »deal preeminently with pattern apart from content.« ". I found the candle scent too heavy.

"Thus, perception, mathematics, and information all concentrate on pattern rather than content. As data move across various kinds of interfaces, analogical relationships are the links that allow pattern to be preserved from one modality to another. Analogy is thus constituted as a universal exchange system that allows data to move across boundaries. It is the lingua franca of a world (re)constructed through relation rather than grasped in essence." Lit by the flame, the candle got a strange fleshly tint to it. "For Wiener, analogy was communication, and communication was analogy." The candle wax was dripping quickly and run into puddles on the small plate the candle was placed on. "Border crossings accomplished through analogy include the separation between flesh and world, and the transformation of embodied experience, noisy with error, into the clean abstractions of mathematical pattern." Ganymede stretched out a finger to play with the flame. The light flickered.

T *ibid, p. 98*
F *ibid, p. 99*
B *ibid, p. 98*

Infinite chess ii.

I went to bed just before dawn. My sleep was too shallow to be satisfying. In my dream, I saw the demon figure again. We were standing together on the field of a seemingly infinite chess board. The fields stretched around us in three dimensions, to all cardinal directions as above so below. The ones too far blurred together in mist. Across from us a figure of an angel loomed over a field piece. The air was quite chilly, my breath turned into white fog. At some point the angel moved, smoothly shifting across fields. After flying in a steady speed for a few minutes it started to steadily slow down until it came to a soft stop. Shortly after, the demon put its hand on my shoulder and grabbed me towards a different field as well.

Once we firmly stood on it, the field came crushing down below us, but we were left unbothered in mid air. The angel seemed to then think for a while before making a new move. As an answer, the demon also changed our position, again triggering a destruction of a field.

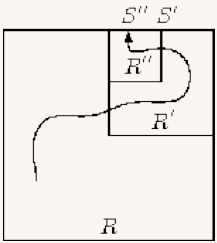
The two of them kept repeating this patterned choreography, the demon dragging me along with it. Just like in the previous dream I started picking up on certain rules after a while. The angel only moved a specific amount of fields, no less no more, in any direction. It never stopped on any of the fields destroyed by us. The demon was not restricted to the Angel's proximity or limited by any other distance bounds; it could pick fields at completely arbitrary locations. Soon enough I realised we were trying to trap the angel. That would mean all the fields in the distance of the specific amount the Angel could move would have to be destroyed. I was not sure how likely this could be. The angel seemed to be getting away pretty well.

In the beginning, the angel's moves were subtle and thorough, while the demon moved more brusquely. But as time passed and the two tried out different patterns of movement, this changed. The demon took longer to calculate a new step while the angel chose more swiftly. I was not sure if this was because the angel became panicky and the demon toyed with it, or if the

demon got tired and the game grew easier for the angel. The demon hissed a few times in frustration but otherwise had not shown any other sign of emotion throughout the dream. The angel's face was usually too far and too blurred to read. When up close, the angel only stared at me tensely.

By the time I woke and left the dream, the infinite board was half broken and the two seemed no closer to finishing than when we began.

The angel's escape route:



Mint i.

Yesterday, I spent the whole afternoon replanting my mint that outgrew its pot. To avoid dirtying the apartment floor I moved out to the green patch next to the entrance gate. The sun warmed up my cheeks but my hands covered in earth stayed cold.

Death beliefs

Ganymede walked me halfway to my night shift. We talked about death beliefs in 18th century England and shared a tangerine. **[1]** magical conception of the body was spread among the people according to which the body continues to live after death, and by death was enriched with new powers. It was also believed that a corpse had healing virtues, so that crowds of sick people gathered around the gallows, expecting from the limbs of the dead effects as miraculous as those attributed to the touch of the kin**g**.

[1] *Silvia Federici*, Caliban and the Witch, *p. 145*

Mint ii.

The leaves on my mint started to curl inwards. When lifting it up, I discovered a handful of thunderflies hanging onto the stem. I went out to the courtyard to shake them off.

Entrance gate

The entrance gate is part of the old land the apartments have been built on. Pieced together from square shards, it stands tall and lean. On each top edge there is a stake protruding in the shape of two horns. The gate's shadow has a deep maroon shade to it, contrasting the green grass. Underneath it the wind stays still. Ganymede was by the gate, brushing fingers against edges. I thought about reification of living matter. Ganymede greeted me. "**[1]**ife is but a motion of limbs… or what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole bod**y**. **[2]**e can see, in other words, that the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine develope**d**." Is your body then just a tool to use, I lifted my hand to say hello. "**[3]**he body is just an automaton, and its death is no more to be mourned than the breaking of a too**l**," Ganymede smiled.

[1] *Thomas Hobbes*, Leviathan, *p. 7*

[2] *Silvia Federici*, Caliban and the Witch, *p. 133*

[3] *ibid*, *p. 139*

Infinite chess ii.

I dreamed about the infinite chess board again. The same scenario repeated itself. But this time, I noticed a small change. The angel's movement limit kept slowly but surely shrinking. This left me with an uneasy feeling. Still, the game was not resolved by the time I woke up.

Chapter 3

Dead matter

reanimated sapience

kneaded into

Mint iii.

By now my mint plant has all shrivelled up. The thunderflies are slowly pilgrimaging. I should get rid of it tonight before they infest the other plants too.

Keys

I forgot my keys and had to ring Ganymede's bell to ask to open the door for me. Ganymede's voice echoed through the intercom system: **ℭ**he body of a living man differs from that of a dead man just as does a watch or other automaton, when it is wound up and contains in itself the corporeal principle of those movements… from the same watch or other machine when it is broken and when the principle of its movement ceases to ac**t**. Soon after I heard the click of the lock. Luckily my keys were hanging from the outside of the apartment door, so the problem was easily solved. I remembered I was once given a present a string of pearls and pierced coins to bring me luck. I tied the string to my keychain. Hopefully this bling will catch my eye next time before I forget the keys hanging in the door again.

ℭ *René Descartes*, The Passions of the Soul, *p. 9*

Sacrifice i.

It has been raining for the past week and half.

The rain has gotten so heavy it started to seep inside the building. I gathered with Ganymede around the barometer. The barometer is built into a wooden column in the middle of the entrance room, right across the gate. Ganymede keeps trying to convince me that it's a bit off centre, but I don't really see that. There's a square carved into the wood where the barometer is sunken into.
The display is designed pretty simply. It's vaguely liquid and lukewarm to the touch. There's a few buttons on the top, but I can't read them, an arrow pointing backwards, the off button, and the brand logo in the right bottom. The rest of the interface would usually show the weather in and outside the apartments, but it was then all blank. We stood around helplessly. Ganymede suggested to sacrifice our own Iphigenia to sooth the unfavourable weather. We could use the barometer column as a sacrifice shrine, Ganymede said. Pour spicy perfume into the flames and drink warm wine.

Mint iv.

Ganymede passed by to give me a small envelope. Inside it was a seed the size of a fingernail. Below the soft skin shell I could feel a hard mechanical core. I took the pot left empty after my mint died and refilled it with fresh earth. I dug a whole in it with my finger, placed the seed there and pushed it in. Then I watered it and smoothed over the earth.

Library books

I was sitting on the floor in Ganymede's room, scratching the kitten's belly. Kitten was buzzing softly. In the moment, the rain outside was gentle. Still, it had not stopped for a few days in a row. It feels like the walls are soaking in the rain and getting filled with dampness. Ganymede was browsing through the bookshelf. Some of the books borrowed from the library were already week overdue.

No one really left the apartment complex since the rains started. There's no reason to go out, everything closed down after the first days of the pour down. We lack nothing. The complex is self-sustaining. But the library Ganymede goes to is off the grounds. It is not too far from us, tucked away in an underground building. I've been there only once, visiting with my high school.

It is a bit of a relic, dusted and well swept, but still a relic. It has low ceilings and a dry, cold air, best to conserve. I remember getting goosebumps. Some books you can only touch with protective handgloves on, others are even in glass shrines. They do also offer books to borrow and take home. But it would be useless now to go there, the library was one of the first places to shut down.

There's a small selection of books in the common room of the apartment complex, a few copies of historical books and travel magazines tucked between the porcelain cups. The books are glossy and oversaturated with colour. Ganymede likes the cups with yellow daisies, but not the books. Ganymede prefers fairytales, anthologies and cooking books. Ganymede always chooses books with care. I wonder if the selection Ganymede brought home last time would have been different if we would have known about the upcoming storms.

I felt a sudden craving to hold a book. I tried to remember the last time I read a paper one. I could only imagine the comfort it would provide on rainy days like these. I have not taken up a book in a years, but I like to see someone reading. It's such a pretty sight. There's something nostalgic about the rustling of paper. Once, Ganymede showed me a cornflower found pressed between two pages. We put it into a glass frame and placed it next to the other books.

Snake pâté

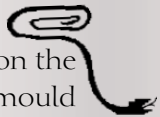
We decided to cook dinner together with Ganymede. I offered to try an old family recipe. It's a reptile aid. The preparation is quite straight forward. **F**irst, you need to find two snakes mating at the crossing of three roads and, when they have just started mating, toss them alive into a pot. Luckily we caught a couple just next to the entrance gate, where the main path forks to two smaller ones, one leading to the winter garden, the other to the wooden church. **N**ext, you throw in thirty drachmas' worth of a newly-slain deer's marrow, also one-third portion of rose oil, the kind that professionals grade »first« or »middle« or »fine ground.« Ganymede always keeps a bottle of rose oil to hydrate tired, dry skin.

F *Nicander*, Theriaka, *line 99-115*

N *ibid*, *line 99-115*

Ƈhen, pour in the same amount of shining oil, and a quarter portion of wax: heat these things in a round-bellied pot, cooking until the flesh is softened around the spines and falls to piece**s**. It's actually quite satisfying watching the meat slide down the tangled up spine **T**hen, take up a shaped, well-made pestle, and grind up all the many ingredients mixed up with the snakes. You should throw the spines far away, because there is a poison capable of doing harm lurking in the**m**. But Ganymede decided to put the spines aside for later use. Now they lie sliced up and arranged in separate piles in a bowl, ready to be grinded. To freshen up the taste we chopped up some mint (I managed to freeze some of my mint plant before it dried up and shrivelled).

We ate in the community room. Ganymede's apartment still had some leftover poisonous snake odour (we opened the window to clean the air) and mine had no proper dining table. Ganymede's hands were resting on the cutlery. Ganymede was telling me how to mould abstracted dead matter.



"**Ɱ**oy models are simplified or compressed models that are capable of accommodating a wide range of theoretical assumptions for the purpose of organising and constructing overarching narratives (or explicit metatheories) that change the standard and implicit metathe-

Ƈ *Nicander*, Theriaka, *line 99-115*

T *ibid*, *line 99-115*

Ɱ *Reza Negarestani*, Intelligence and Spirit, *p. 124*

oretical interpretations according to which such theoretical items are generally represented."

I took a big scoop of the snake pâté. "Toy models come in small and big varieties." Ganymede flipped one hand so the palm faced the ceiling. "Small toy models are simplified versions of only one theoretical model (essentially it is a model in a collapsed form)," Ganymede flipped the other hand, "whereas big toy models are models that accommodate different and often seemingly incompatible models and theories, such as general relativity and quantum mechanics." I sprinkled some mint over my plate. "Put differently, big toy models represent a compressed form of model pluralism, and in order to do so they are required to have a conceptual architecture plastic enough to accommodate and faithfully represent the main features of different theoretical frameworks, while at the same time being capable of preserving the contrasting features of these accommodated systems as distinct categories." I poured us both water. Ganymede brought out the fancy glasses with ornate stems and red bowls. "Toy models, on the other hand, are not only explicit metatheories in themselves, but also make explicit the implicit metatheoretical frameworks of their constituent ideas, observations, and methods. By doing this, toy models are able to keep these implicit metatheoretical assumptions underlying their theoretical

T, S, W, P, T *ibid*, *p. 126*

commitments in check, and therefore avoid the risks of inflationary model**s**." The glasses felt too important to hold tap water. Ganymede drinks only from the finest porcelain. "**Ƭ**heir utility lies not only in the idea that they permit some theoretical arbitrage by combining and spanning different metatheories, but also, and more importantly, in their ability to facilitate the reinterpretation, reassessment, and reapplication of conventionally interpreted ideas and observations. However the real value of a toy model is that one learns from it by breaking it in the real universe; but not until one has systematically played with i**t**." I was grateful for the cold refreshment of the water. The red of the glass gave the water a strawberry tint. How do you stop a model from inflating.

"**Ħ** position that allows us to treat ourselves—both our functional capacities and what we take ourselves as—from an objective point of view, a view from nowhere and nowhen. This is a viewpoint that distinguishes the necessary conditions and capacities for the realization of the theoretical and practical faculties, or engagement with the intelligible, but which at the same time is not bound in principle to the local characteristics of the subject's experienc**e**." I drank the water in big gulps. How do you go to nowhere and nowhen. Ganymede cut off a small piece of pâté and ate it.

Ƭ *Reza Negarestani*, Intelligence and Spirit, *p. 127*

Ħ *ibid*, *p. 124*

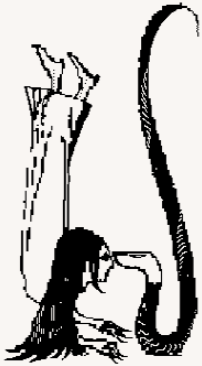
Bane Helen

My stomach was heavy with the snake pâté when I lay to sleep that night. Even in dream my body was still burdensome. I was wondering alongside a riverside, longing for rest. It was already way past noon when I decided to make my bed next to a shady water meadow. I curled up under a tall mint plant, its heavy leaves offering some protection. Mints are water-loving and grow plenty by streams where they are fed with the moisture, and delight in gleaming rivers. The leaves were studded with small Demons. Similarly to my first dream, the demons picked through the air, sorting molecules and light in a weird act of photosynthesis. They waved their red, scaly hands the in air, pushing unnecessary molecules away and pulling needed ones in. It was a subtle change, but the plant was becoming sturdier, density increasing, interior becoming rich in complexity.

Tired but not sleepy I watched them lazily. As the nightfall neared the movements became slower, until they fully stopped. On each leaf, the demons rested their heads on the shoulder of their neighbour, forming a chain, up until to the one sitting closest to the stem, who just leaned against the plant itself. My vision was becoming hazy too, ready to fall asleep. In the corner of my eye, I still caught the wriggling shapes of snakes. They were coming out of their holes below the mint's roots. They rushed by, but one moved forward feebly.

The scales withered by age rustled and its sight was dim. It moved only sideways, haltingly. I remembered the story of Bane-Helen, who, angered by a horned viper, **S**truck the blood-letter in the neck and belched forth its deadly poison into it, turning the body to ruin. Therefore Helen crushed the middle of its trailing shape, breaking the ligatures of the back about the spine, so that the backbone started from its body. From that day forward the blood-letter and the crooked-roving cerastes alone of snakes move haltingly, oppressed by their injur**y**. I wondered if this snake also displeased a Helen, or if it was just the old age that weakened it. The snake did not move past the threshold of the mint plant.

S *Nicander*, Theriaka, *line 310-320*



Mint v.

I put the pot with the mechanical seed on my night table. Yesterday, around midnight, it started humming. I only heard it faintly through the sound of the rain. The sound continued mechanically for about two hours before it went silent again. I checked the pot in the morning. The earth shifted around to form a small ditch in the middle, just where I originally planted the seed. No baby leaves as I expected.

The princess who loved insects

Since it has been raining so much, we have been spending more time inside. Some of the evenings, me and Ganymede would make ourselves comfortable in the community room. We would put the beaded lamp into the empty fire place and pretend it warmed us like a real fire would.

Closing the curtains we would imagine that once opened again, the outside would **F**ade into a soft green picture from a fairy tale. Then, coming down from the hills there will be a prince riding, bright in green and silver with seven hundred archers riding behind him, pennants stirring, horses tossing, jewels flashing**...**

F *Shirley Jackson*, The Haunting of Hill House, *p. 20*

Warmed up by the fireplace, Ganymede told me a fairytale. It was about **[H]** courtyard where a fountain plays and the queen waits, weeping for the princess to retur**n**. The princess is in a voluntary imprisonment inside the tummy of a loom. This fairy loom is a masterpiece of spider-work, an automated machine gathering thread, twisting and turning it, weaving and braiding. Strung together punched cards give the rhythm. The princess is weaving a royal portrait of a dizzy mosaic made of tiny blue and white squares. **[I]**t's all pure algebr**a**, Ganymede began the story.

[K]nown as Ada Lovelace, she was then Ada Byron, the only child of Annabella, a mathematician who had herself been dubbed Princess of Parallelograms by her husband, Lord Byro**n**. **[S]**oon after Ada' s birth, Lord Byron went his own opiated way, and Lady Byron brought her daughter up with all the excesses of stringent discipline to which well-bred girls were supposed to be subjec**t**. **[S]**he didn't have a name to call her own, but she did have many other avatars: Ada Augusta King, Countess of Lovelace; Ada Lovelace, née Byron; A.A.L., the first programmer; She is also Ada, the language of the United States military machine. »She is the Queen of Engines, the Enchantress of Numbe**r**.«

[H] *Shirley Jackson*, The Haunting of Hill House, *p. 20*
[I] *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 4*
[K] *ibid*, *p. 5*
[S] *ibid*, *p. 27-28*
[S] *ibid*, *p. 27*

Hda was ill for much of her short life, walking with crutches until the age of seventeen, and endlessly subject to the fits, swellings, faints, asthmatic attacks, and paralyses which were supposed to characterise hysteria. »Heaven knows what intense suffering & agony I have gone through how mad & how reckless & desperate I have at times felt,« she wrote. »There has been no end to the manias & whims I have been subject to, & which nothing but the most resolute determination on my part could have mastere**d**.« **S**he still tried to be the dutiful daughter and did her best to lead a domesticated life. She was the mother of two boys and a girl by the age of twenty-four. But it wasn't long before she was describing her children as »irksome duties & nothing more.« She wrote of her husband with affection, describing him as »my chosen pet,« but also expressed her indifference to any »mortal husband,« even her own. »No man would suit me,« she wrote, »tho' some might be a shade or two less personally repugnant to me than other**s**.«

Ada was hunting for something that would do more than represent an existing world. Something that would work: something new, something else. Even the doctors agreed that she needed »peculiar & artificial excitements, as a matter of safety even for your life & happiness.« Such stimulations simply did not exist. She had to engineer them to suit herse**lf**.

H *ibid, p. 29*
S *ibid, p. 28*
A *ibid, p. 31*

Hda met a machine which she came to regard as »a friend.« It was a futuristic device which seemed to have dropped into her world at least a century before its time. »We both went to see the thinking machine (for such it seems) last Monday,« Annabella wrote in her diary. »While most of the audience gazed in astonishment at the machine, Ada »young as she was, understood its working, and saw the great beauty of the invention.« The machine was the Difference Engine, a calculating system on which the engineer Charles Babbage had been working for many year**s**.

Not even countesses were supposed to count. But Ada could be very determined, proud of her own staying power, and sometimes absolutely convinced of her mathematical, musical, and experimental genius. »I am proceeding on a track quite peculiar and my own,« she wrote. »I mean to do what I mean to d**o**.«

Ada had translated the memoir of Menabrea, an Italian military engineer. Enormously impressed by this work, Babbage invited her to join him in the development of the machine… »I asked why she had not herself written an original paper on a subject with which she was so intimately acquainted? To this Lady Lovelace replied that the thought had not occurred to her. I then suggested that she should add some notes to Menabrea's memoir; an idea which was immediately adopte**d**.«

H *Sadie Plant*, zeros + ones, *p. 5*
N *ibid*, *p. 32*
A *ibid*, *p. 7*

Her notes made enormous leaps of both quantity and quality beyond a text which turned out merely to be providing the occasion for her work. A hundred years before the hardware had been built, Ada had produced the first example of what was later called computer programming.

Babbage and Ada developed an intense relationship. »You are a brave man,« Ada told Babbage, »to give yourself wholly up to Fairy-Guidance! I advise you to allow yourself to be unresistingly bewitched… No one,« she added, »knows what almost awful energy & power lie yet undeveloped that wiry little system of mine.«

Ada hoped that the difficulties in the way of constructing either the Difference Engine or the Analytical Engine »will not ultimately result in this generation's being acquainted with these inventions through the medium of pen, ink, and paper merely,« but she also had no doubt that the immediate construction of the machine was not the only key to its influence. But the greatest obstacle to the construction of the Analytical Engine was simply technical capacity. The Engine was left on the nineteenth-century drawing board, and it was a hundred years before anything akin to Ada's software would find the hardware on which to run.

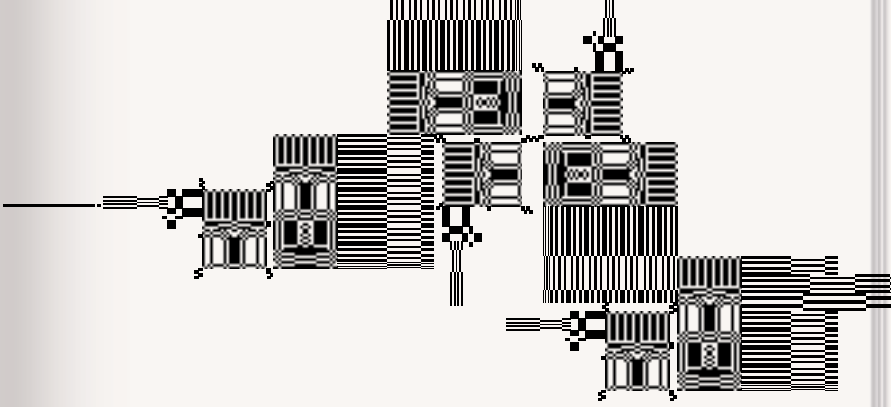
She said, »I am a Prophetess born into the world, and this conviction fills me with humility, with fear and trem-

Н *ibid* , p. 9-10
А *ibid*, p. 9
В *ibid*, p. 7
А *ibid*, p. 20-21
В *ibid*, p. 22
С *ibid*, p. 21
S *ibid*, p. 20

bling!« **H**da had other ways and means. »I am a Fairy you know,« she wrote. »I have my own fairy resources, which none can judge of.« **A**utomated processes were only hints as to the new species Byron's daughter had in store.

H *ibid, p. 154*

A *ibid, p. 15*



Sacrifice ii.

The weather has only been getting worse. During last night, the storms got so heavy the building closed all the curtains and shut the windows. I woke up to the sound of the main door locking up. The turn of the key and clack of the lock rang through the apartments. My room felt significantly colder and there was the smell of wet, just dug up earth. I made myself some lavender tea to calm my shaking hands. I was comforted for a bit by the sound of boiling water, louder than the rain, and the warmth of the steam, thicker than the icy air. Someone knocked softly on my door and Ganymede said, "**C**he Dardanelles have been closed to all ships suspected of carrying the plagu**e**."

C *F. W. Murnau*, Nosferatu, *min 59:00*

Mint vi.

I put out few mugs on my window parapet to collect some fresh rain water for the mint plant.

Sacrifice iii.

The next morning the building remained shut. The rain has gotten more mellow, the sound of drops on all windows became more melodic. The windows won't allow to be fully opened and the curtains shut themselves every time the rain gets a bit stronger. There's no way getting past the entrance gate since a few days. This afternoon Ganymede was walking from apartment to apartment, asking for some leftover milk teeth. Ganymede was already born with two canine teeth, small and round. They are kept safe in a small sachet with a potpourri of dried rosemary and juniper shavings. Ganymede said that placing milk teeth in each corner of the land could ward off the bad weather. I had no milk teeth to offer.

Mint vii.

The mint has finally sprouted some leafs. They are hard as a nail and translucent. The plant smells balsamic but not specifically minty.

Sacrifice iv.

It's not raining anymore. The sky is bright blue and the sun is strong. We all opened our windows and doors to let some fresh air in. Kitten has been sun bathing on the grass all day long. Strangely, the rain has not stopped past the entrance gate. Still, our barometer is all sunny and warm and the fence has not been letting a single rain drop through. Ganymede said to not move the milk teeth just to be sure.

Chapter 4

Medium
generative and lively

not alive but undead

putrefaction sealing

all together

Library books ii.

We were standing by the entrance gate. The rain stopped for a bit outside but it did look like it might start again any moment. The gate was also still shut tight. There was no way getting out the gate. It would have been easier to walk over the sky, above the clouds.

St Meletios the Younger

Out of curiosity, I skimmed through one of the history books from Ganymede's bookshelf. It was about St Meletios the Younger, an Anatolian runaway. Fleeing from the prospect of marriage, **ℏ**e led a wandering life that took him on pilgrimage to Thessalonica, Rome, perhaps Santiago de Compostela, and Jerusalem. His feet became infested with worms. St Meletios treated them like pearls, or so his hagiographer says.

He eventually settled in the hills separating Attica from Boeotia and established the monastery that still bears his name. At various distances from the monastery church he built a series of hermitage**s**.

ℏ *Michael Angold*, Alexius I Comnenus and monasticism, *p.* 268

Mint viii.

The mint now has enough leafs to make tea from it. I broke one off (it cracked like dried bone), crushed it up and put it into hot water. It melted away quickly and the taste was pleasing. Similar to any other mint tea with a bit of honey and some other herbal undertones.

Dizziness

Ganymede has been feeling dizzy the past two weeks. First, Ganymede assumed it was because of bad weather change, but it continued well after the rainy days died away and the sun stayed up constantly on the horizon. The dizziness came in quick spells, never lasting longer than half an hour. Ganymede would first loose sense of taste and then stop feeling anything altogether. Sometimes, Ganymede's hands would also get cold and heavy to lift, quite cold to the touch too. Ganymede even broke the red glasses because of this, spilling water all over the carpet. Overall, this led to a sense of dissociation from the body, which became reified. The body was reduced to an object with which Ganymede ceased to be immediately identified with.

Ganymede only came to complain to me after the dizziness became too regular to ignore. I checked in the wooden box if there was a package insert containing side effects. Neatly folded, it was tucked in the left edge. I took it out. It immediately fell out and spread out on the chequer-square table. Bag of marbles, muscle with a single pearl, net of stars, envelope with sunflower seeds, sack of chicken teeth. Ganymede lifted up the muscle and read it out loud to me.

> *The living and the dead at his command,*
> *Were coupled, face to face, and hand to hand,*
> *Till, chok'd with stench, in loath'd embraces tied,*
> *The ling'ring wretches pin'd away and died.*

On the backside there was a small drawing, about three centimetres long. It was a copy of a woodcut showing two bodies tied together. One lay flat on its back, head tilted lifelessly. The other on top of it, palm planted on the other's upper arm, torso lifted from waist up, head looking away. Both naked, their hands, waists and legs each bound to the other's by a rope. Below, a description: A popular emblem called Nupta Contagioso showing a woman being tied to a man plagues by syphilis, at the

C *Virgil*, The Aeneid VIII, *line 438-88*

A *Reza Negarestani*, Corpse Bride, *p. 130*

King's order. Nupta Contagioso or Nupta Cadavera literally suggests a marriage with the diseased or the dead: a forcible conjugation with a corpse, and a consummation of marriage with the dead as a brid**e**. Ganymede took the pearl out of the muscle. The muscle was padded with soft velvet, red as a tongue. **C**he baroque details of the Etruscan's punishment: a living man or woman was tied to a rotting corpse, face to face, mouth to mouth, limb to limb, with an obsessive exactitude in which each part of the body corresponded with its matching putrefying counterpart. Shackled to their rotting double, the man or woman was left to deca**y**. Ganymede slowly turned the pearl around. The text spiralled in rings.

To avoid the starvation of the victim and to ensure the rotting bonds between the living and the dead were fully established, the Etruscans robbers continued to feed the victim appropriately. Only once the superficial difference between the corpse and the living body started to rot away through the agency of worms, which bridged the two bodies, establishing a differential continuity between them, did the Etruscans stop feeding the livin**g**. I raised the velvet tongue up. There was not much underneath it, only the glossy surface of the muscle. **O**nce both the living and the dead had turned black through putrefaction, the Etruscans deemed it appropriate to unshackle the bodies, by now combined together, albeit on an

C, **T**, **O** *ibid*, *p. 131*

infinitesimal, vermicular level. Although the blackening of the skin indicated the superficial indifferentiation of decay (the merging of bodies into a black slime), for the Etruscans—executioners gifted with metaphysical literacy and alchemical ingenuity —it signalled an ontological exposition of the decaying process which had already started from within. Ganymede carefully put the pearl back. **H**ristotle says, that we are punished much as those were who once upon a time, when they had fallen into the hands of Etruscan robbers, were slain with elaborate cruelty; their bodies, the living [corpora viva] with the dead, were bound so exactly as possible against another: so our souls, tied together with our bodies as the living fixed upon the dead. Meanwhile, I was skimming through the rest of the star net. The stars were quite sharp and I had to take care to not cut myself when I handed one over to Ganymede. **I**t is not the supposedly living body which is tethered to a corpse to rot, because it is exactly the soul qua living which is bound to a corpse—namely, the body. On the next one, **T**herefore this necrotic confinement is both the price and a means of having a body as instrument, and then using this instrument to govern and eventually unite beings. There was only two stars left, **I**f the intelligibility of the world must thus imply a »face to face« coupling of the soul with the body qua dead, then intelligibility is

H *Reza Negarestani*, Corpse Bride, *p. 132*
(Quoted by Cicero from Aristotle in Hortensius.)

I, **T**, **I** *ibid, p. 134*

the epiphenomenon of a necrophilic intimacy, a problematic collusion with the rotting double which brings about the possibility of intelligibility within an inert cosmo**s**, I gave Ganymede the last star, **Y**et in doing so, reason reanimates the dead rather than bestowing life upon it; for in terms of the Aristotelian body qua cadaver, intelligibility is the reanimation of the dead according to an external agenc**y**. I collected the stars back into the net and tied it with two loose hair strands. **I**t is indeed ghastly for the living to see itself as dead; but it is true horror for the dead to be forced to look at the supposedly living, and to see itself as the living dead, the dead animated by the spurious livin**g**.

I poured the chicken teeth in Ganymede's held out hands. Most of them were flat with a thin edge. There was also a set of longer and almond shaped ones. We only found one flat and ridged. All of them were surprisingly white. **H**phairesis [abstraction] consist in two vectors of operation, of negative and positive directions in regard to each other, diametric opposition but synergistically continuous and reinforcing. For aphairesis, as taking away or subtraction, emphasis simultaneously removal and conservation - the removed and the reminde**r**, Ganymede picked up the flat and almond ones, comparing them **A**n arithmetic formulation of the Etruscan metaphysical cruelt**y**, the thin edge of the

Y, **I** *ibid, p. 135*

H *ibid, p. 136*
A *ibid, p. 137*

flat one was a bit cracked, **S**hed belonging, while the almond one was in perfect condition **C**onservation after subtraction: despite being chained to the festering corpse or being subtracted, the soul is able to conserve some of itself and render the body intelligible, it looked like a hooked fang used to tear food, **T**he persistence of the soul in conserving its essence, or the determination of the One in remaining, certainly wards off the threat of becoming the dead qua the body or belonging; but only at the cost of becoming intimate or problematically hooked up with the dead, it was also almost double the length of the flat one, **I**t is the persistence of the soul in remaining after its katabatic contact with the body that opens up the opportunity of its coming into unison with the intellect, I took the ridged one, **B**y mimicking the dead, the soul can repose intimately with the dead until it is reclaimed through reason by intellect, it was considerably heavier than the others, **W**hat could be worse for vitalism than at once being animated through a necrophilic alliance, and simultaneously, protected under the aegis of the void, and the colour of it was a few shades off, **I**t is decay that provides the bridge between the latter (the problematic embracing of nothing) and the former (the subtractive bond with the body or belonging). That which arises from death can only peacefully repose among the dead, as living, when I knocked it against the

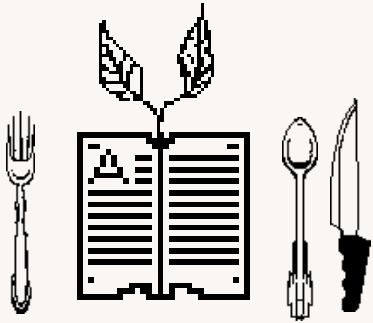
S *Reza Negarestani*, Corpse Bride, *p. 138*
C *ibid*, *p. 138*
T *ibid*, *p. 139*
I *ibid*, *p. 140*
B *ibid*, *p. 143*
W *ibid*, *p. 147*
I *ibid*, *p. 147*

table it sounded hollow, **C**o stave off the realism of the dead which follows from its coupling with the body, the soul disguises its putrefaction as survival; that is to say, reformulates the problem of decay according to new correlations with its own Ideals and reasons. However in distracting the dead, the soul is exposed to problems whose concerns belong neither to the living nor to the dea**d**, doing that, I chipped a bit of paint off, **R**atabasis, or the descent of the soul, is not radical enough, for it conveys the profit-seeking openness of the soul to the body as an instrument, an economical openness based on mutual affordabilit**y**, the white was only a layer of colour, **T**he soul is directly fettered to nothing, kept alive to rot away in and for itsel**f**, painted over a piece of carved wood, **R**eal climax of the Etruscan torture, for this reason, is the feeding of the living while strapped to the dea**d**, I tried to scratch off the white from the other teeth too, **S**econd necrosis, darker than the other, shrouded in the explicit cruelty of the firs**t**. But they were genuine. "**I**t is strang**e**," Ganymede shrugged, "**A**ll roads lead to the bosom of the dea**d**." This was not very helpful. But medicine inserts often list up all possible side effects, mostly to protect the producer. I just decided to make some mint tea from my plant and told Ganymede to rest while I cooked bone marrow soup.

C, R *ibid, p. 149*
T, R, S *ibid, p. 150*
I, A *ibid, p. 160*

Handgloves i.

Ganymede's hands still lack feeling. They are dried of any colour and warmth. Ganymede has been sowing a pair of handgloves to replace them. It goes slow, since Ganymede's usually nimble hands are now more wooden. Still, the handgloves are shaping up slowly. So far, Ganymede embroidered them with juniper shavings from the potpourri of milk teeth, snippets of loose book pages, information sequences and some of the hair strands from the net of stars. I offered to help but Ganymede says it cannot be done by anyone else but the person the gloves are meant for.



Chimeric children

The weather has been warm for a few days now. The sun also dried up the damp grass, so we agreed with Ganymede to have a dinner on a free spot next to the entrance gate. We prepared some milk bread, apricot jam, and green tea in a flask. I also stopped by the community room to borrow two cups, the white ones with yellow daisies. Ganymede only drinks from the finest porcelain. I thought being out in the sun might warm Ganymede's hands up and help with the dizziness. I tore us each a piece from the bread; it smelled sweet and fermented and soft. The day was rounding up nicely.

We stayed outside after finishing eating. It felt quite abstract to sit on the sunny lawn while outside the rain still went on. Since the days are getting longer now our sky was still lit, while the other side stayed clouded in rain. The fence around the building is constantly wet to the touch but otherwise the bad weather has not gotten inside. Soon, the moons took the sun's place, glowing equally strong. We both sat on a blanket, soaking in light. Ganymede was half laying, expanding over my view, legs stretched out. A landscape assembled from mottled undead matter.

Ganymede held a library book. It was a paper back around the size of a palm. Not too thick, it looked like it could be finished in one sitting. The pages were already tattered with use, yellow and stained; it was well read. The shape, material and design of it made it obvious it came from times before us. Ganymede listed through it. The book more hung to Ganymede's hand than it was held by them, as they have been getting significantly weaker. The paper rustled. **B**y the late twentieth century, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformatio**n**.

B *Donna Haraway*, Cyborg Manifesto, *p. 7*

Cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fictio**n**. **C**he cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocenc**e**. I imagined Ganymede, swinging a snake headed tail.

Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden, that is, through fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmo**s**. **E**n utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without en**d**. **T**he cyborg would not recognise the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. Cyborgs are not reverent; they do not re-member the cosmo**s**. **W**e are excruciatingly conscious of what it means to have a historically constituted body. But with the loss of innocence in our origin, there is no expulsion from the Garden either. The snake tailed Ganymede took a sip from the tea, holding the cup with a lion's paw.

Every story that begins with original innocence and privileges the return to wholeness imagines the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of the self, the tragedy of autonomy, the fall into writing, alienation—

C *ibid, p. 5*
C, U *ibid, p. 9*
E *ibid, p. 7*
T *ibid, p. 9*
W *ibid, p. 21*
E *ibid, p. 59*

that is, was, tempered by imaginary results respite in the bosom of the Other. These plots are ruled by a reproductive politics—rebirth without flaw, perfection, abstraction. The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential.

Ganymede of divine stock,
half made of serpent half made of viper

The cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always a spectre of the ghost in the machine. What counts as nature—a source of insight and promise of innocence—is undermined, probably, fatally. The boundary between physical and nonphysical is very imprecise for us. Physics books are Harlequin romances. Our best machines are made of sunshine; they are light and clean because they are nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of spectrum. People are nowhere near so fluid, being both material and opaque. Cyborgs are ether, quintessence. Ganymede breathed fire, eyes rolling crazily. From between the flames Ganymede's teeth flickered, yellow gems stuck in the gums.

T *Donna Haraway,* Cyborg Manifesto, *p. 7*
C *ibid, p. 11*
W *ibid, p. 12*
O *ibid, p. 13*

Microelectronics is the technical basis of simulacra—that is, copies without originals. The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. Consciousness is an achievement, not a natural fact. I prefer a network ideological image, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic. To be constituted by another's desire is not the same thing as to be alienated in the violent separation of the labourer from his product. Ganymede's torso was a goat caught between the two predators, fur dirty with mud clots.

Communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women worldwide. Technologies and scientific discourses can be partially understood as formalisations, i.e. as frozen moments, of the fluid social interactions constituting them, but they should also be viewed as instruments for enforcing meanings. The boundary is permeable between tool and myth, instruments and concept, historical systems of social relations and historical anatomies of possible bodies, including objects of knowledge. Indeed, myth and tool mutually constitute each other. Lion smashed with its paws, goat seethed fire and snake oozed venom. Made of patchwork matter, Ganymede was

M *ibid*, p. 36
C *ibid*, p. 33
O *ibid*, p. 24
I *ibid*, p. 46
T *ibid*, p. 25
C *ibid*, p. 33

a disparate bunch. First, the chimera creeped crouched through the landscape. But as it got darker, Ganymede gained confidence, straightening and eventually galloping.

Che task is to invent better abstractions and autopoiesis probably isn't i**t**. **F**urthermore, communications sciences and modern biologies are constructed by a common move—the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment, and exchang**e**. **B**iology here is a kind of cryptograph**y**. **I**nformation is just that kind of quantifiable element (unit, basis of unity) that allows universal translation, and so unhindered instrumental power (called effective communication). The biggest threat to such power is interruption of communication. Any system breakdown is a function of stress. Soon enough, Ganymede run through the countryside, ravaging. Leaving a trail of spoil, bones got crushed and meadows burnt. Living and dead scurried away to escape the wrat**h**.

Che feminist dream of a common language, like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of perfectly faithful

C *Nicholas Gane & Donna Haraway*, When We Have Never Been Human, What Is to Be Done?, *p. 141*

F,**B** *Donna Haraway*, Cyborg Manifesto, *p. 34*

I *ibid*, *p. 34*

C *ibid*, *p. 52*

naming of experience, is a totalising and imperialist one. In that sense, dialectics too is a dream language, longing to resolve contradiction. Perhaps, ironically, we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos. From the point of view of pleasure in these potent and taboo fusions, made inevitable by the social relations of science and technology, there might indeed be a feminist scienc**e**. Eventually, Ganymede stopped on a top of a hill and turned a human face to me. Ganymede's mouth sprung open like a switch blade and barked.

Writing is preeminently the technology of cyborgs, etched surfaces of the late twentieth century. Cyborg politics are the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectl**y**. The bark was a left-over of language. There was no gentleness in the words, only a musky bestial tone.

The silicon chip is a surface for writing; it is etched in a molecular scales disturbed only by atomic noise, the ultimate interference for nuclear score**s**. **C**yborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them

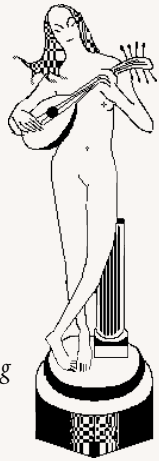
W *ibid, p. 57*
T *ibid, p. 13*
C *ibid, p. 55*

as other. Communication sciences and biology are constructions of natural-technical objects of knowledge in which the difference between machine and organism is thoroughly blurred; mind, body, and tool are on very intimate terms. It is not clear what is mind and what is body in machines that resolve into coding practices. That is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine. From below the hill a prince appeared, bright in green and silver, pennants stirring, horse tossing, jewels flashing. The prince threw an unerring arrow upwards, aiming at Ganymede's manifold.

We find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. Biological organisms have become biotic systems, communications devices like others. A catalogue of promising and dangerous monsters who help redefine the pleasures and politics of embodiment. All the characters explore the limits of language; the dream of communicating experience; and the necessity of limitation, partiality, and intimacy even in this world of protean transformation and connection. Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations. Though both are bound in a spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess. But the wind was too strong and the unerring arrow went errant, flying past the hill into a cloud of rain. Ganymede did not even notice and

C *Donna Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto, p. 36*
I *ibid, p. 60*
T *ibid, p. 57*
W *ibid, p. 60*
A *ibid, p. 63*
M *ibid, p. 64*
T *ibid, p. 68*

continued to bark up rests of words. The prince hopped off the horse and began to climb the mountain. Fussing through the treacherous rocks and loose roots, it took quite a while.



The prince throwing an unerring arrow

There are several consequences to taking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility.

T *ibid, p. 68*

Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries, we are they. Up until no**w**. Ganymede was almost finished tearing language apart when the prince leaped to the top of the hill. Victoriously, the prince walked up to the Ganymede and looked straight into the several eyes. Then, the prince reached out to Ganymede's mighty jaw and kissed it. Each kiss a bribery for silence.

Chere is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination—in order to act potentl**y**. **W**e require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous worl**d**. Past the fence a thunderstorm just started. Ganymede put a bookmark between the pages and closed the book.

C *Donna Haraway,* Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 66*

W *ibid, p. 67*

Handgloves iii.

Ganymede's hand has been persisting despite the spreading rot. There's indeed something ghastly for the living to see itself as dead.

Duel

Warm from the picnic we had, I cuddled up between my cool bedsheets. I didn't close the curtains and the moon shone into my room. It was just as bright as during a day. Falling asleep, my gaze was fixated on the moon. By now, I'm used to the mechanical humming of the mint plant. A comforting white noise, it lulls me to sleep. In my dream, I was climbing out of a window. The night gown I was wearing got tangled up with the handle but I managed to free myself and jumped down three or four floors. My feet hurt a bit after the fall but I was more bothered by the cold of the earth. I didn't bring any shoes.

I walked swiftly to the path and past the forking where we have found the the pâté dish snakes. There, I turned left towards the main gate. I seemed to be walking with a specific goal in my head, clutching a key. Wherever I was going I knew I had to be there at midnight.

I arrived to the main gate. The two orbs held by the effigies glowed faintly. During the day made of limestone, now they were glass containers. Red for the angel and blue for the demon, they were filled with coagulated liquid. I remembered the key I had with me is for the gate. It's still locked since the rains, but it easily opened with the turn of the key. I half expected to step into a cloud of rain, but the outside was dry.

Before me, a staircase spiralled to the sky. With no support it hung in mid air. The steps felt way too wide and not tall enough. I had to make multiple steps to cross one. They were made out of the same damp limestone as the fence. It took me more than half of the night to climb them. There was a trail of dented in stone where others walked before me, but I doubt anyone walked here in a long time. The staircase felt old and forgotten, left hanging in the past like a garden of Babylon.

By the time I got to the top platform, my head was spinning. To enter the platform, I had to go through a facsimile of the entrance gate below. The platform itself was oval, with battlement along the edges. I must have

been very high, since I could not see the apartments anymore and breathing became exhausting. There was also the scent of roses, but very faint.

I was not alone anymore. To my left, Maxwell's demon stood, holding a rapier. And, across from me, the green and silver prince that bribed Ganymede. From between the pendants on the vest the prince pulled out a sword and offered it to me. I accepted it. The prince also pinned a pendant charm to my chest. I noticed the demon already had one too.

I placed myself on the right side of the platform, facing the demon. I did not like the way my steps echoed in the silence. I tied my night gown around my knees so it would not be too much in the way and took up a general duelling stance, hand on hip, one knee bent other leg extended. I felt out of place. The prince then said, "cross swords with the one who stands beneath the inverted castle—and triumph."

I looked up to the castle above us, but had to immediately refocus on my opponent. The demon lunged at me. I awkwardly dodged the attack. From my quick glance I only picked up the sharp edges and Gothic details of the castle.

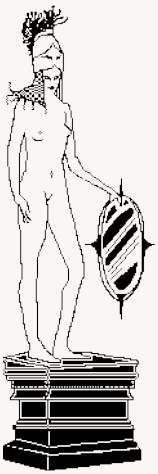
First, I mostly tried to evade the demon's sword. The demon was not aggressive and the attacks were more cunning than deadly. I considered if the goal was

to tease me. Remembering my experience from the previous nights, I observed the movements. Soon enough, the patterns became obvious and easy to follow. I realised the objective is not to wound me but to gain my pendant. The demon swung the rapier at me, took a step a back and dodged in repeated sequences of movements. The way out of this limbo seemed now easy enough. In the right moment, I reached out my hand and tore the pendant off the demon's chest.

The duel

Handgloves iv.

This morning, after a sleepless night, Ganymede finished the handgloves. The last few stitches were sawn in while we shared a hot coffee in the common room. Ganymede then slipped into the undead matter, just as comfortably as putting on a new dress. Tailored to Ganymede, the pale hand shone subtly. Veins run through the linen-like material. Ganymede held out the hands to me. They felt like soft rabbit skin. Undead now clings to Ganymede in a necrophilic intimacy.



Demon effigy

It has been getting sunnier past the fence too. The entrance gate is also sometimes open again. It still shuts itself again occasionally. My first instinct was to figure out the logic and pattern behind the closing and opening times. Instead, Ganymede suggested to just place something in the threshold to hinder it from closing.

For now, we put there the demon effigy's pedestal.

Pantheon

I am not part of a pantheon, Ganymede said, but I will be a god soon. We will remake the world anew every hour. This is my first inkling I might have supernatural powers.

Chapter 5

Undead

a force expanding
over the landscape

lawful yet unpredictable

A thank you to

This **I**s an odd work. Part of its strangeness lies in the fact that the members all get together to collaborate. It also makes a unique »revolution« in my own work. It stands unafraid to change as the story struggles with itself, and as I drew it, it gave some of its boundless courage back to me. I fervently hope this message is passed along to you, the reader.

It's been so long that I've been forgotten what started it, but when I was in elementary school, there was a class-sized afternoon »battle« in a vacant lot with the students from a neighbouring school. I don't remember the outcome, so it couldn't have been much of a battle. But at the time, I felt a strange uplift—a feeling of fulfilment (sad to say) that I remember distinctly. I wonder what it means.

I *Be Papas*, Revolutionary Girl Utena, *Chiho Saito in the afterword*

No matter how gallantly we battle on, deep in our heart is the oppressive yearning to have someone take care of us, which sometimes finds its way into our facial expressions. In my opinion, that's a very human failing and very sweet.

The theme in this story, »the power to revolutionise the world«, isn't just some fantasy. My teenage self asks me if I've gained the power, continued the battle and never lost my dream. »The truth against the world!« —Yes. Certainly. Fiction writers, at least in their braver moments, do desire the truth: to know it, speak it, serve it. But they go about it in a peculiar and devious way, which consists in inventing persons, places, and events which never did and never will exist or occur, and telling about these fictions in detail and at length and with a great deal of emotion, and then when they are done writing down this pack of lies, they say, There! That's the truth!

Apollo, the god of light, of reason, of proportion, of harmony, number—Apollo blinds those who press too close in worship. Don't look straight at the sun.

I talk about the gods; I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth. The only truth I can understand or express is, logically defined, a lie. Psychologically defined, a symbol. Aesthetically defined, a metaphor.

T *Ursula K. Le Guin*, Left Hand of Darkness, *p. xv*

A *ibid*, *p. xvii*

ϖhen I was in the art club in high school I was very anxious to hear praise from a girl I admired, and tried to draw pictures that would match her taste. Looking back on it now, they weren't pictures I actually wanted to draw and I can see that I was wasting my time… probably. But even so, at the time it really filled my hear**t**.

ƭhe artist deals with what cannot be said in words. The artist whose medium is fiction does this in words. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words. All fiction is metapho**r**.

I stare straight at Apollo.

ϖ *Be Papas*, Revolutionary Girl Utena, *Kunihiko Ikuhara in the afterword*

ƭ *Ursula K. Le Guin*, Left Hand of Darkness, *p. xviii*

go to sleep sleepy

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This is a U̲ book

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Kristi Fekete

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possible without their upstanding work.

Seven hundred archers,
running up a hill.

This is a carrier bag woven out of ancestral tales.

Just like the body of an undead lich, its material are past stories reanimated into new fiction. As a lich digs up the bones of the passed to generate power from them, so does this book divine future from stories already told. In order to shape future, past matter has been taken to build a new present. In this anachronistic landscape, undead has become a living, generative medium. Some of the stories have been lifted from their context to spite themselves and their authors, others to celebrate them. Either way, it is now up to the reader to further the stories.

Parallel to this process, our living bodies and the virtual have also been putrefying into each other. In the virtual, bodies have been turned into lines of information to be standardised. From these, norms have been created and models built. In this context too, the dead is reanimated: intellect vitalises undead information matter to serve as a tool. We wield these tools as extensions of us, becoming undead ourselves. We are all liches now.

This is a U book
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For further information address the author